(a) whether it is a fact that manufacturers of consumer products such as soaps, ice-creams, biscuits and breads were trying to pass on rising input costs to consumers by reducing weights of packaged products while keeping their prices unchanged;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for weight reduction; and

(c) the steps Government has taken to curb the practice?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) to (c) (i) The attention of the Government has been drawn to media reports which state that manufacturers have reduced quantities of packaged goods while holding price constant.

(ii) The retail sale price declared on a pre packed commodity is decided by the manufacturer.

(iii) In respect of 'net quantity' declared on a package, commodities, not listed in the Third schedule to the Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977, can be packed in any quantity.

(iv) Commodities listed in the Third Schedule to the Rules have to be packed only in standard quantities provided in the said Schedule. However Rules give an option to the manufacturers to pack a commodity listed in the Third schedule in any quantity other than the standard quantity also. When they exercise the option, a declaration "not a standard pack size under the Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977", or "non standard size under the Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977" , have to be made on the package.

Climatic change and health

834. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether medical experts have pointed out that health should be put at centre-stage and to move away from individual comforts, realize one's responsibility and work as a society to protect health from climatic changes;

(b) if so, whether with increasing manifestations of climatic changes through excessive floods, devastating storms and droughts, the experts stressed the need to put health at the centre-stage;

(c) if so, what were the other main points suggested by the experts;

(d) whether Government has considered them; and

(e) if so, when the action in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (e) The climate change will affect, in profoundly adverse ways, some of the most fundamental prerequisites for good health; clean air and water, sufficient food, adequate shelter and freedom from disease as per World Health Organization (W.H.O.) report presented in the One Hundred Twenty Second Session of Executive Board on 16/1/08. The global climate is now

changing faster than at any point in human civilization and many of the effects on health will be felt. The most severe risks are to developing countries, with negative implications for the achievements of health-related Millennium Development Goals and for health equity. The first detectable changes in human health may well be alterations in geographic range and seasonality of certain infectious diseases including vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever and food-borne infections. Warmer average temperatures will be combined with increased climatic variability. Heat waves are a direct contributor to deaths from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases particularly among elderly people. High temperatures also raise the levels of ozone and air pollutants that exacerbate cardiovascular and respiratory disease and pollen and other aeroallergens that trigger asthma (IPCC, 2001). W.H.O has also drawn attention to the urgent need for generating mass-awareness on how to combat it or minimise its harmful impact and suggested several mitigation strategies which are (1) lessening of reliance on coal-fired generation of power that causes air-pollution, (2) use of active transport (bicycling and walking) (3) eating of foods that are grown locally and are lower in food chain (*e.g.* fruits, vegetables and grains). The Indian Council of Medical Research (I.C.M.R.) has constituted a Task Force on "Global Environment Change and Health", which is focussing on areas such as (i) Respiratory Diseases and Air Pollution, (ii) UV-B Cataract and (iii) Vector-Borne Diseases and Climate Change.

Decreasing number of students for medical entrances

†835. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the per capita availability of doctors in the country;

(b) whether the number of students in medical competitive examination is constantly decreasing in the country; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (c) As per information furnished by Medical Council of India the total number of registered allopathic doctors in country is 7,13,428. Thus the allopathic doctor population ratio at present works out to 1: 1584 approximately. In addition there are more than 6 lakhs practitioners of Indian System of Medicine and Homoeopathy in the country. Talking all these number together the doctor population ratio comes to 1: 860 approximately.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), which conducts All India Pre Medical/Dental Entrance Examination, has informed that there is a decrease in the number of candidates registered for the examination, but the exact cause for the decrease is not known. According to CBSE, the probable cause could be revised eligibility criteria, less number of under graduate and post graduate seats in medicine, long duration of medical course, paucity of jobs, disparities in salaries *vis a vis* other professional courses.

Negligence of Doctors

836. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.